Course: COLL 137
Term: S18
Room:

COURSE TITLE: PHILOSOPHY OF COFFEE: FINDING THE BEST BREW IN SPACE AND TIME

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Eric Pan
Time: Wednesday 18:30 - 19:30
Email: zp3@rice.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Out of your busy every morning schedule, have you ever paused ever so briefly to think about what exactly you are drinking and what makes it so good? Through this course, coffee and espresso aficionados will gain a deeper understanding of the intricate flavors, colorful history, popular brewing methods, and diverse cultures that go into making every cup of coffee. Regardless of the student's familiarity with coffee-drinking, the course will provide tools for anyone to isolate more scents and flavors through tasting crash courses, to analyze their chemical progenitor and the neurobiological action of caffeine, and study traditional coffee cultures through regular lectures. Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned in class and from readings through an online discussion forum, and a final in class exam will draw most entirely from the online student discussion posts.

To supplement the classroom experience, visits to landmark Houston coffee shops near Rice will alternate with the lecture each week, helping students to cement their new knowledge as well as to go beyond the hedges and engage with the greater Houston community. A total of six of these field trips will be taken over the semester (four mandatory and one optional), so students should expect to allot some money for coffee purchases during these excursions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Content-Area Objectives:

1. Describe and compare different brewing methods and distinguish their contributions to the character of each brew.
2. Illustrate the underlying chemical mechanisms that contribute to each drink's flavor and neurological effects on the drinker and his or her health.
3. Compare and analyze the role coffee has played in various cultures throughout history and in the present day.
4. Determine terroir of different coffee varietals.
5. Reflect on and evaluate the preparation of an unfamiliar brew.

Transferable Skills:

1. Distinguish subtleties in flavor and aroma in more than just coffee beverages, but also in food and wines in general.
2. Develop the ability to probe beyond the surface not only in food and beverage, but in all aspects of one's life (not guaranteed).

3. Acquire a familiarity with the neighborhoods of Houston surrounding Rice (all the great date night places).

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- Students are asked to bring $10 of materials fee by the third week of class to cover brewing equipment and coffee expenses (this is necessary for the instructor to afford different coffees for two in-class tastings).
- It is encouraged that students purchase at least both a cup of coffee and a shot of espresso during each outing for learning purposes.
- Each student therefore should expect $6 * 4 trips = about $24 in total of coffee cost.
- Transportation will be partly provided by the course instructor during normal class times; students may choose to commute by means of public transportation with prior approval.
- All required readings will be uploaded to the course Canvas page (*On Food and Cooking* [OFC]*,* Harold McGee, 2004; *Coffee*, Clark and Macrae, 1988; *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* [UG]*,* Mark Pendergrast, 2010).

DISCUSSIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND ASSESSMENTS

1. Each week before class the students will post questions or discussion topics that are related to the topic of that week's class in a class-specific Facebook discussions page. Each student is held accountable to one thoughtful post and comment. Students will only receive credit if the comments are posted 24 hours prior to the start of class (Monday by 18:30).
2. Two tastings, one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end, will be held during class. The first tasting will be more lecture style, where students will taste very distinctive coffees so they can develop a solid background in tasting. The second tasting will ask students to apply what they have learned through the semester by identifying an unknown coffee.
3. An in-depth scrutiny of knowledge and intuition will be held on week 13 of class. The focus will cover materials drawn almost exclusively from the Facebook discussions page (this will not be the only graded item; in class pop-quizzes on reading materials may spontaneously emerge, as did Athena from the forehead of Zeus).

GRADE POLICIES

- Discussion online - 30% (6% each reading, 3% for post, 3% for comment)
- Attendance/ Class Participation - 42% (3% each week, 1% for attendance, 2% for participation)
- Final Tasting - 3%
- Pop-Quiz(!) – 1%
- Presentations – 4%
- Scrutiny of Knowledge and Intuition - 20% (50% correct = pass)

ABSENCE POLICIES

Attendance is mandatory at all classes and excursions (which will be held during regular class hours). In the event of an emergency or unavoidable conflict, every effort should be made to contact the course instructors in advance. If this is not possible, arrangements must be made with the course instructors to make-up the missed work. Severe personal emergencies (severe illness, death in the family, etc.) will be handled on a case-by-case basis. We adhere to Student Health's no-note policy.

RICE HONOR CODE

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Disability Support Services

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Disability Support Services (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with the instructors to discuss your accommodation needs.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Schedule

	Topics and Highlights	Preparation/Homework
Week 1	**Introduction to Philosophy of Coffee – 1/10**	
	Welcome! Introductions and logistics • Roundtable discussion • Meet 'n Greet • Establish class norms • Review syllabus and expectations	
Week 2	**First Tasting – 1/17**	Handout Week 2

	• Anatomy of coffee
	• Introduction to how to taste coffee
	  ○ Sight
	  ○ Smell
	  ○ Slurp
	  ○ Savor
	  ○ Spit (optional)
	  ○ Savor again
	  ○ Smile
		Comments or questions

Week 3	**Chemistry of Coffee – 1/24**	Handout Week 3
	Intro to the chemistry and neurological effects of caffeine • Discussion of reading and student responses • Lecture • Videos	Comments or questions

Week 4	**Field trip: Fellini – 1/31**	Bring a note card and pen
	Examine Italian espresso, Italian furniture (optional), and Italian baked goods (optional).	
Week 5	**Introduction to Brewing – 2/7**	Handout Week 5
	Brewing styles: French press, pour over (siphon), drip, cold brew ● In-class interactive demo ● Inquiry-based demonstrations ● Discussion	Comments or questions
Week 6	**Field trip: Siphon/Cavo (depends on roaster-rotation) – 2/14**	Bring a note card and pen
	Examine variants of pour over and French press brewing styles	
Week 7	**Introduction to Brewing Continued – 2/21**	
	Brewing styles continued: Ethiopian, Turkish, Espresso ● In-class interactive demo ● Inquiry-based demonstrations ● Discussion	Comments or questions
Week 8	**Field trip: Fix Coffeebar – 2/28**	Bring a note card and pen
	Learn about third-wave coffee culture and its position in the history of coffee	
Week 9	**History and Economics of Coffee - 3/7**	Handout Week 9
	Lecture and discussion on reading and topics ● Review readings and students' responses Lecture interspersed with small group discussion	Comments or questions
Week 10	**Optional Field trip: Blue Nile or Roastery Visit – 3/14**	
	No formal class due to Spring Break	
Week 11	**History and Economics of Coffee – 3/21**	Handout Week 11
	Lecture and discussion on reading and topics ● Review readings and students' responses Lecture interspersed with small group discussion	
Week 12	**Presentation Time – 3/28**	

	Students will be asked to demonstrate their understanding of flavor pairings through 6-minute long presentations in groups of 3 More details to follow	
Week 13	**Scrutiny of Intuition and Knowledge – 4/4**	Study forums and readings
	The answer is always C	You are essentially free
Week 14	**Field trip: Southside Espresso – 4/11**	Bring a note card and pen
	Get to know a local Houston coffee roaster	
Week 15	**Final Tasting – 4/18**	
	Come have a good time	